

MARITIME SECURITY IN SOUTH WEST ASIA

By

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“It is not clear whether sailors be counted amongst the living or dead”

Diogenes

The Indian Ocean

The warm rich embayed Indian Ocean of 28 million square miles covering 20 percent of the earth's water expanse and lapping the shores of 3 continents is the smallest but most strategic waterway encompassing 30 littorals and 11 land locked states with 1284 islands. Moreover this region contains 1/3 of the world's population, 1/4 of landmass, 3/4 of strategic reserves of oil, iron ore and tin as also 70 percent of world's disasters. The littoral countries are widely disparate in size, population and per capita incomes as also the composition of their societies. Some are well developed while others are only fifty percent literate.

The region is a cradle of all major religions as also a kaleidoscope of isms, such as fundamentalism, tribalism, socialism, communism, talibanism as also adventurism with a spectrum of political hues ranging from democracy, monarchy to dictatorship. None of the 19 Arab States follow a democratic system. Most countries have a fragile polity with terrorism in the garb of freedom movements and religious fundamentalists.

The focus on the Indian Ocean started during the fascinating period when Buddha lived between 563-483 BC with Buddhism traversing to the East through its warm waters. It was the gateway for proselytising as also for cultural inroads into South East Asia. The Mekong Valley, Malaya, Cambodia, Java, Jakarta and Bali were dotted with Hindu principalities such as the Kingdoms of Suvarnadipa, Sri Vijaya, Annam and Angkor. The ancient civilizations of China and India, in a way met on the Mekong river in a country aptly named Indo-China.

Navigators were familiar with the Pole star, Kamal (sextant) and the Matsya Yantra (wet compass) as also with astronomy which made phenomenal progress due to the efforts of Aryabhatta and Varahamihara of India.

It is generally accepted that there are six subregions in this area — South Asia, the Gulf, East Africa / Horn and Red Sea, Southern Africa, Chagos, Seychelles, Mascarene group and South East Asia. The north east boundary of this link ocean has not been clearly defined.

Maritime Security

Maritime security is both multi-dimensional and multifaceted and involves military and non-military issues. These include naval threats and challenges (military security issues), arms trafficking and narco terrorism as well as piracy (hard non military security issues) along with shipping, fishing, sea bed minerals

and offshore oil and natural gas resources, vulnerability of sealanes of communication (SLOC), and illegal immigration. Moreover maritime security includes environmental protection, nuclear issues, ballistic missile defence as also maritime management as the seas are indivisible. Hence this paper will focus the need for maritime cooperation in the region to ensure the stability and security of this strategic link ocean and its sealanes of communications (SLOCs). Tokyo New Delhi and Washington are in many ways natural allies and should accept maritime responsibilities. They should demonstrate their capacity and capability to oversee the security and stability of their respective ocean regions in an interlocking maritime cooperation to ensure good order at sea.

In the current environment, we do not have the luxury of making clear – cut distinctions between traditionally ‘military’ and soft ‘non military issues such as energy security, privatisation of ports, ship building, delimitation of extended maritime space, legal and regulatory mechanisms in the maritime zones, protection of marine environment, pollution and the security of dual-use oceanographic data.

The collapse of the Berlin Wall had triggered the current phase of economic globalisation which is being driven by information technology. The collapse of the World Trade Centre, a decade later, focussed on the security dimension with a greater force. This is being described as ‘the third wave’ of the ongoing multi-dimensional process of globalisation and utilising the oceanic highway. Professor Barnett of the Naval War College stated ‘globalisation is splintering the concept of national security as also generating new markets for both supra and sub national security providers for which naval forces offer an unique response’.

Terrorism

The events of 11 Sept. marks a watershed in the international security environment. Non-state actors and non-state identities are likely to assume increasing importance. The concept of armed conflict between nation states may have to be modified with changes in the rules as well as the conduct of warfare. Moreover global terrorism is mainly funded by narcotics. The polarisation of international politics along religious lines as in the Crusades could be a possibility but there is a positive move by the International Community to treat it as action against the Taliban who supported Osama bin Laden and his Al Queda terrorist network. They had earlier destroyed the 2000 old Buddha statue carved in rock at Bamian without heeding the advise of UNESCO and almost all civilised countries to protect this world heritage. Women and girl children were denied their basic rights of education as also to earn their living. Men were forced to wear beards and other religions were advised to display yellow ribbons which was to differentiate them from Muslims. Flogging, shooting and imprisonment without trial was the order of the five years governance by the Mullahs of Taliban. The International Community took little action until the catastrophic attack on the World Trade Centre in New York. It was USA who formed an international

coalition and went after the terrorists in Afghanistan. Only President Bush with his single-minded resolve and resources could have taken the necessary steps to remove the cancer of international terrorism from the water planet paradoxically called earth.

Regional Security

With regard to regional associations, SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) appears to have run aground on the rocks of sub-continental obduracy because of cross border terrorism affecting Jammu & Kashmir. The India Ocean Rim – Association for Region Cooperation (IOR-ARC) which Nelson Mandela during his state visit to Delhi in Jan 95 declared as ‘the natural urge of the facts of history and geography that Nehru spoke of should broaden itself to include exploring the concept of an Indian Ocean Rim for socio-economic cooperation and to improve the lot of the developing nations’ is unfortunately in shallow waters owing to the pulls and pressures of the main actors India, Australia and to an extent South Africa with Mauritius being the interlocutor. In the South West, the GCC (Gulf Coordination Council) tends to be enmeshed in Arab politics and Islamic issues which has metamorphised into Jihad, cultural and International terrorism with the events of 11 Sept. More than a decade ago, a Muslim analyst observed that there were signs of the free floating hostility directed against communism gravitating to Islam.

Ethnic conflicts, famine and lack of effective governance has prevented any significant movement among the nations in the Horn of Africa. Similarly East African states failed to maintain their cooperative relations and delineation of land boundaries inherited from their colonial days. Only Asean (Association of South East Asian Nations) has established itself as a sub regional vehicle for cooperation in economic affairs and has recently addressed security matters involving maritime cooperation in SE Asia. Apec has also been active in furthering regional cooperation in shipping and maritime safety. The Transportation working group under APEC has taken a number of initiatives to facilitate ocean trading communities which have a strong alliance with maritime security.

The environment in the Indian Ocean changed from geostrategy to geo economics, from conflict to commerce as also from a continental to a rimland outlook which merits world communities such as Japan, India, US and EU to take necessary steps to safeguard the heritage of mankind – the Oceans.

The volatile Indian Ocean with its neo geo-politics thus became the link ocean for human sustenance as also energy flows to achieve the politico-economic aspirations of the people particularly of developing countries and this has contributed to changes in managing maritime security in this region where only 10 littorals are privy to 65 percent of the world's oil reserves.

The emphasis also shifted from Euro-Atlantic to Asia-Pacific which was accelerated by the advent of ocean trading blocs which brought in its wake broader strategic and economic participation with an annual traffic of 70,000 ships traversing the link Indian Ocean. In planning for a better tomorrow, India needs to urgently focus on updating port infrastructure in view of the mismatch between capacity and demand for cargo handling which not only encourages corruption but also imposes a penalty of \$ 250 million per annum on India's exporters and importers due to the slow turn around of ships as estimated by the World Bank.

Militarisation of the Indian Ocean

The militarisation of the Indian Ocean will continue as currently five Carrier groups from US and UK and support ships from other nations including Japan have initiated action from the sea against the terrorists operating from Afghanistan.

The Gulf with its oil resource will remain the hot spot in the region to ensure the transport of energy to Europe, Japan, USA & industrialising China. India's Navy will have to play a major part in this region with Asean keeping the Malacca Straits free of regional politics. Japan's Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF) with four escort flotillas, armed with missiles as also six divisions with 17 submarines fitted with Sub Harpons and with the largest number of P3C Orions outside the USA fitted with missiles and Sea Dragon mine sweeping helicopters needs to project her naval potential to ensure cooperative and comprehensive security in their region of responsibility.

India will also require to modernise and expand her two fleet navy as per the sanctioned strength approved four decades ago by the Indian Parliament for which the new naval base at Karwar is being constructed.

There is another compelling reason which had been utilised during the Cold war by USA to target ballistic missile from the Arabian sea to the soft under belly of the Soviet Union. It is now an ideal platform for the tactical land attack missiles such as the Tomahawks for prosecuting littoral warfare by long range strikes from the sea to targets in Afghanistan when denied air bases in surrounding countries. The presence of several thousands of Arabs and Pakistanis assisting the terrorists was exposed during the capture of Kundah with the plea from Pakistan for a safe passage for their nationals after 3000 of them, mostly professional terrorists who have operated in Kashmir, have been killed.

Organizations such as the Gulf Co-operation Council should be encouraged to play a greater military role against terrorism provided that USA exerts more pressure to resolve the Israeli-Palestine issue.

The US can be expected to reestablish the relationship with Iran as the latter straddles the choke point of the Straits of Hormuz. Iran's has in turn

withdrawn its call for the export of Islamic revolution which was a threat to the Gulf and instead has spelt out the need for a dialogue to ensure peace and stability in this region.

And finally the geopolitics of oil is likely to exacerbate the instability of the region. The US Central Command will be of a greater importance to the US strategic community in view of the requirement to ensure the safety of hydrocarbons in South West Asia which accounts for almost 65 percent of Asian oil consumption. This has resulted in an increased number of tankers and LNG/LPG carriers whose safety will be one of the major security concerns in the region.

SLOC Safety and Security

SLOC is the route taken by a ship to transit from A to B. In maritime and economic parlance, it should be the shortest distance, economical and timely delivery of cargo. SLOCs are the arteries of a region and serves as an umbilical cord for the country's economy.

But during confrontation, SLOCs translates itself as the strategic path varying in course and distance depending on the geography of the landmass, reefs and shallows as also the locations of ports and harbours. Hence to the military, SLOCs are an instrument of maritime power with geography being the determinator for the forces being deployed to support friends or deter adversaries.

To a politician, it is however the state of relations with countries located along the sea route that will develop a strategy for the security of SLOCs. Hence there is a significant link between SLOCs and geography in the context of maritime strategy. The subject of SLOC security is therefore closely linked to the maritime cooperative mechanism leading to the expansion of navies inevitably followed by an arms race resulting in a tortuous and contested arms control regime.

India's security concerns stretches across a broad spectrum. They are at global, regional and local levels with no clear distinction or division between them as sea-lanes in the region are proximate to the Asian landmass, and pass through narrow choke points, which can be interfered with. The threats to SLOCs can be classified into two distinct security groups. The first is the external factors such as piracy, laying mines, military and territorial conflicts and disputes of some islets and the second being non traditional threats such as narco-terrorism, drug trafficking and illegal migration. Global recession is the other aspect as lower prices will adversely effect the welfare economics of the Gulf States leading to dissatisfaction and therefore encouragement to fundamentalists.

The internal factors are the making of the maritime community itself due to poor seamanship, crew incompetence and unsatisfactory ship husbandry as 60 of the 77 tankers lost at sea during 80's were over 20 years old. Moreover

according to ILO there are approximately seven million Asians working abroad of which 50% are illegal migrants. Smuggling in the US and Europe nets profit of \$30,000 per person. The IMO has adopted an instrument titled interim measures for combating of unsafe practices associated with the trafficking or transport of migrants by sea. They are all sensitive factors affecting the maritime security of the region.

The ongoing naval build-up by regional countries would be another threat to SLOC security. In order to ensure sea-lane security many countries in the region, including a number of medium and small states, are building up their maritime capabilities by acquisition programmes. It is estimated that 200-250 major warships were originally planned for procurement by the end of the new century. Furthermore, analysts have expected that more than 30 modern submarines have been ordered by Asian countries in the next decade. The region will therefore continue to be one of the most lucrative markets for defence manufacturers. But it can be said with little exaggeration that the real arms race in southeast is among the suppliers, rather than the recipients. The simmering down of bi-polar deterrence and the expansion of national sovereignty notified by UNCLOS III has become a significant motive for smaller regional powers to modernise and expand their navies.

Regional SLOC Security Cooperation

As sea lines are crucial to the survival and prosperity of the Asian Pacific countries, the safeguarding of SLOC security is in the interests of all regional countries. Since the world's oceans are indivisible, no country can defend the wide radius of the sea-lanes by itself. In many ways, SLOCs is the classical multilateral maritime matrix as merchant ships are built in one country, owned by another insured by a third, registered in a fourth and crewed by nationals of a fifth country thus providing an explicit example of how a nation's maritime security interest extends beyond its own maritime boundaries. Therefore, cooperative approaches to the safety and protection of sea-lanes needs to be developed, as enumerated below:

- (a) First, the understanding of the interpretation of UNCLOS stipulations related to the SLOC security needs implementation. In addition countries could reach agreements regarding cooperation in the law enforcement on the high seas for guaranteeing the norms for international navigation on the high seas.
- (b) Settlement of islands' sovereignty disputes and overlapping maritime claims should be put on the national agenda. As an expedient measure, the establishment of joint patrol areas and joint development zones needs to be initiated.
- (c) The ways of guaranteeing oil and gas transportation merits special attention.
- (d) Naval cooperation is of particular importance for SLOC security. Bilateral and multilateral naval cooperation would reduce uncertainty in maritime

security environment. Concrete cooperative approaches would be worked out for the protection of SLOCs especially when dealing with non-conventional threats. They might include humanitarian assistance, search and rescue at sea, avoidance of incident at sea (INCSEA), piracy, cooperative maritime surveillance, and mine-countermeasures.

Maritime Diplomacy

This was demonstrated at the 'Bridges for Friendship' at the International Fleet Review at Mumbai (15-19 Feb) which was attended by 16 Naval Chiefs and dozens of flag officers of 29 nations taking part in the review of 90 ships which in a way reflected the maritime SLOC shift to the Gulf, Hormuz, Malacca, South China Seas and Sea of Japan which in a manner is the 'silk route' of the post Cold War 'Blue planet'. Moreover the presence of warships from USA, Israel, Iran and Iraq which are currently in an estrangement mindset was not only an indicator of maritime diplomacy of ship visits but also a pointer to the coming of age of the 50 years old modest Indian Navy as a stabilising regional power supported by US, UK, France and Russia for ensuring cooperative security and safety in the warm embayed Ocean of Destiny.

India is actively pursuing 'Look East' policy with maritime cooperation at the bilateral and multilateral levels.

Confidence Building Measures

- e) The need for preventing conflict such as Confidence Building Measures (CBM), Conflict Avoidance Measures (CAM), Trust Building Measures (TBM), Conflict Resolution Measures (CRM), Confidence Building & Security measures (CBSM) and tension Reduction Measures (TRM) merits more attention for ensuring greater stability in the Indian Ocean Region.

There have been two regional organizations engaged in maritime security issues. APEC has been active in recent years in furthering regional cooperation in shipping and maritime safety. The Transportation Working Group under APEC has taken a number of initiatives to facilitate maritime commerce. ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum) has also started to move into the area of maritime cooperation. CSCAP (Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific) is perhaps the premier institution for track-two process on security issues.

Since 1995, there has been a Maritime Cooperative Working Group affiliated to CSCAP. The working group has convened several meetings and has been productive in making suggestions for regional maritime cooperation. It is suggested that a regional SLOC cooperative organization be set up based on the Maritime Cooperative Working Group. The new organization could coordinate all the bilateral and sub-regional activities in the region, apart from liaison among regional law enforcement authorities and merits to be taken on board while considering maritime security of the region.

The dramatic increase in the volume of commerce flowing into and out of East Asia has further sharply raised the security value of SLOCs in the Asia-Pacific region. The supply of energy is becoming more critical in East Asia, and it is likely to become a major security concern before too long. In the wake of various threats to the free flow of trade, various maritime cooperative mechanisms are being energized. The proposal for the creation of multilateral maritime regimes is also being proposed which needs to be studied and its ramification clearly understood.

Agenda for maritime cooperation

A framework for regional maritime cooperation could include joint search and rescue doctrine, anti piracy patrols, and joint seminars on marine ecology and seabed exploitation.

Advance maritime cooperation will encompass joint forces for disaster relief, environmental protection, surveillance and upholding the Laws of the seas.

The broader maritime cooperation could be the joint development of marine technology, maritime diplomacy, development of eco-tourism, marine parks and safety of offshore assets.

Indo-Japan Relations

India and Japan share a number of common values and friendship. For example, independent India did not demand reparations from Japan after World War II for their occupation of Andamans and Nicobar in the Bay of Bengal. Further India did not participate in the San Francisco treaty of September 1951 as Japan and China were specifically left out. Again Jawaharlal Nehru invited Japan to the Bandung conference of 1955 despite the objections of Indonesia.

But due to the Cold war and perhaps the lack of imaginative ideas to sustain and cement such a relationship as also because of political indifference there was a history of missed opportunities as the agenda of the two countries was in a way too narrowly focussed. For example, Japan's economic strength revolves around the oil life line from South West Asia and therefore there is no reason why the proposals for a pipeline from IRAN or CAR to the Indian Ports cannot be another supply point for Japan.

Therefore it merits a more comprehensive dialogue particularly on maritime related issues such as SLOCs, Search and Rescue, piracy, naval diplomacy, confidence building measures and the implications of Asia-Pacific security. Nuclear issues and disarmament and the impact of Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) on regional peace and security also merits careful analysis.

In this vast canvas of strategic, economic and political issues, there are other areas such as the reformation of the UN, restructuring of the Security

Council, information technology, WTO, environmental protection, money laundering, airline security and biological warfare which are not being covered in this paper although they come within the parameters of comprehensive security for South West Asia as also for other regions.

In hindsight, it appears that India failed to appreciate Japan's post war political and economic compulsions in the same way as Japan did not comprehend the aspirations of a country such as India that had emerged independent after centuries of colonial bondage. For India, non Alignment and solidarity among recently liberated Afro-Asian Countries was important while Japan felt her close alliance with US was indispensable for a faster economic recovery which was apparent and justified.

Comprehensive security and cooperation between countries are at three levels-global, regional and bilateral. Prime Minister Moris visit to India in August 2000 emphasised the need to build a global partnership for the security of the environment, anti piracy operations, drug trafficking and a number of issue outside the context of Japan's relationship with the US. Similarly bilateral and regional issues need to be multi-faceted and multi layered to be meaningful and mutually beneficial.

Nuclear issues

Tokyo's reaction to India's Pokhran nuclear tests was sharp and the outcry was far louder than at any time in the past despite Japan's contradictions at home.

It is appreciated that the nuclear issue is highly emotive at the popular level in Japan but it merits recognition regarding the basic difference between actual possession and taking shelter under a nuclear umbrella as also Tokyo being less silent regarding China's explosions in 1995. India's dilemma in having Pakistan and China poised on its shoulders and a country of over a billion citizens must perforce possess their own deterrence. Hence for psycho-political reasons, India was forced to become a reluctant nuclear power. She is conventionally stronger, than both her neighbours and has pronounced 'no first use'. She is not obliged to defend any other state. Her command and control is under civil authority. Hence Pokhran has solved her structural dilemma to some extent.

Nevertheless there are areas where cooperation in the nuclear field will be of benefit and result in better confidence building measures between Japan and other Asian Countries.

- a) There are for example similarity of views on the question of nuclear disarmament as both countries are openly committed to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction. Nonetheless, Japan failed to use her moral power in 1991 as the world's only nuclear victim to support India's

- proposal for a time bound elimination of nuclear weapons. Instead Japan pressed for an indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and in addition refused to support the US proposal for a secret ballot.
- b) The second nuclear related issue is with regard to export controls as India's record is impeccable. India and Japan should find a solution through mutual consultations to bring India's power reactors under safeguards so that Japan could participate in the building of reactors in India in the same manner as Russia is cooperating in constructing the 1000 mgw nuclear power station in South India.
 - c) The third area is related to regional cooperation with countries in the Asia-Pacific such as Japan, Taiwan, Indonesia, Vietnam, South Korea and Thailand in the same pattern as Euratom (European Atomic Energy Community) to explore issues of waste management, nuclear safety, and advanced nuclear research which could lead to some sort of Asiatom.

Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD)

Japan and India, despite belonging to different categories of nations have a convergence of opinions towards BMD albeit with Japan being conscious of threats from North Korea and China and India from Pakistan and China. However the mutual concern between Japan and India are the missile transfers between China, Pakistan and North Korea. Moreover the BMD offers an opportunity to address the issue of global disarmament as in theory it would render nuclear weapons redundant.

UN Peace-keeping operations

In the past Japanese maritime forces have been engaged in several Katas such as:

- a) Kata of minesweeping (Gulf war 1992)
- b) Kata of UN peace keeping 1992)
- c) Kata of escorting freighter Akatsuki carrying processed uranium from Europe to Japan.
- d) Kata of SLOC protection (1983)

With the Pko legislation, the Japanese government have reinterpreted the role of the JSMDF to a more acceptable functioning rationale, both domestically and internationally by opening the door to a whole gamut of international activity of which India has been one of the earliest and perhaps the most experienced in UN peace keeping. This role for peacekeeping by Japan closely approximate her pacifist tradition and also accords with their post cold war multilateral approach to solving international disputes. Such a mindset contributes to a changing role of the JSMDF as a stability factor in promoting maritime security.

Regional Confidence building

There has been a significant transformation in Japan regional security portfolio with Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa who initiated the need for a Japan-Asean dialogue to promote regional stability as demonstrated by the Asean

Regional Forum (ARF). The Japanese Defence Agency announced in March 1995 its 'basic policy on security dialogue which could be extended to education, training, Information technology, cultural cooperation & North-South dialogue. An interesting example is Prime Minister Obuchi's visit to Myanmar in 1999 as that country opens out to the Bay of Bengal as also to the western end of the busy international choke point, of the Malacca Straits. China's modernisation and the expansion of her Navy will no doubt merit attention.

Piracy

Seafarers expect to sail ships in safe seas. The trauma of a piratical attack can leave a mariner scarred for life. The numbers of reported piracy attacks world-wide for 1999 rose to 40% compared with the 1998 figures and almost triple compared with 1991 according to the International Maritime Bureaus (IMB) Piracy Reporting Centre at Kuala Lumpur with South East Asia and Somalia having the highest density. A total of 285 separate attacks took place on ships either at sea or at anchor and in port. While the number of crew killed has declined, the trend to violence is a case for concern. Pirates carried guns on 53 occasions and knives were used twice as often as in 1998. Vessels were boarded in 217 instances and on 11 occasions, pirates fired upon the ship they were targeting.

The Japanese concern over piracy has become more serious following the disappearance of 4,200 ton M.V. Tenyu, a Panama registered Japanese vessel owned by Kobe based Masumoto Kisen Shipping Co. The vessel was on its way from Kuala Tanjung in North Sumatra to South Korea with a cargo of aluminum ingots worth US\$ 1.9 million. The ship apparently turned up under a new name and all fifteen crewmembers were reportedly missing or presumed killed/murdered. The recent case of MV Alondra Rainbow, was similar to that story of MV. Tenyu. The vessel was however captured by Indian navy and coastguard in the Arabian Sea and subsequently handed over to her owners. Unlike the MV Tenyu, the crew was safe but these incidents have only added to Tokyo's concern about the vulnerability of Japanese owned shipping in these waters.

More recently, Tokyo and Singapore concluded a bilateral military agreement that permits Japanese patrol ships and aircraft to be stationed at Singapore as also to evacuate Japanese nationals in disturbed areas. Earlier, during the Indonesian crisis leading to the fall of President Suharto, Tokyo had positioned aircraft and patrol vessels in Singapore on standby for evacuation duties. This agreement would certainly increase Japanese naval presence in the Malacca Strait and South China Seas, as far as 2000 miles from home.

As a result, the Japanese maritime forces would now engage in Kata of anti piracy and Kata of forward deployment. Earlier too, Japan had twice been asked to aid in the safe passage of merchant shipping in distant waters and had

agreed to police the Malacca Straits. Each of these Katas reflects a gradual external incremental activity of their Navy

In February 2001, Japan announced that they are considering deploying vessels to patrol the straits of Malacca to combat piracy. Tokyo's proposal to join forces from Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea and China to patrol the waterways comes during a growing debate over the possible revision of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution. This is a sea change in Japanese thinking regarding maritime security. Tokyo is realising that Japan is a major maritime power with strategic interests as well as pressing economic challenges. Moreover Japan has come under growing pressure from the United States to assume a greater security profile for a more active role in her national interest.

Safety of Life at Sea

This galloping increase in the volume of commerce particularly of energy supply by tankers has sharply raised the implications of disasters in the choke points of Hormuz, Malacca and South China seas for safe and unrestricted passage which is a basic requirement for the safety of SLOCs particularly for Japan, Korea, Taiwan and now China who are overtly dependent on oil supplies.

There are more than 150 collisions at sea annually due to poor visibility, radar unservicability, hull failure, boiler explosions and above all human errors. More than 97 bulk carriers were lost during the last four years with 532 casualties. 380 oil tankers visit Indian ports annually. Therefore energy supplies is both a tool for industrial development as also a weapon to limit the potential of adversaries during conflict. During the IRAN-IRAQ tanker war (1980-88), 543 tankers were attacked of which 80 vessels were sunk. This man made disaster cost a further 200 billion US dollars in hull insurance which increased the price of oil from 12 to 25 dollars per barrel which in turn slowed down the growth of India's dollar a day economy.

Moreover 30 IMO conventions for safer and cleaner seas have been enacted encompassing disaster managements, oil spills, vessel traffic management and hydrographic assistance which merits being taken into account while considering maritime security in this region and meriting an integrated regional search and rescue organization with access to satellites for ensuring safety of life at sea. UNCLOS creeping jurisdiction impinging on innocent passage through territorial waters, transit passages through international straits and archipelagos, naval activities such as seeding anti submarine devices in the EEZ of other countries and the legal issues relating to the shipment of nuclear waste through territorial waters and straits could be the casus belli for conflict.

Search and Rescue Organisation

1500 lives were lost when the Titanic sank in 1912 on her maiden voyage. More recently 571 lives on board the passenger ship were saved when the Greek passenger vessel Oceania had lost her engines and was battling winds above 80

miles per hour and 24 foot waves. What was common to both ships was that they were built at reputed yards but what was not common to both was the communication system. While the Titanic depended on her simple wireless radio to relay the SOS, the Oceania alerted the nearest Rescue Co-ordination Centre (RCC) via satellite. The RCC in turn immediately set in motion the rescue operation. It took the rescuers, one day to reach the Titanic but 16 aircraft's and several vessels arrived within hours to assist Oceania.

Satellite Communication System: GMDSS and India

Search and rescue has come a long way due to instant maritime communication. Today merchant ships ply with on the confidence high seas because of a new satellite communication system called the GMDSS (Global Maritime Distress and Safety System). The GMDSS is provided by a global body called INMARSAT which is under the aegis of International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Japan is a maritime nation and needs to take active interest in cooperation with regional navies and coastguards for the safety of life at sea.

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India as a Regional Maritime Power

The talks recently held in Washington offers a new template to develop the much talked about natural alliance between the two large democracies India and the United States.

The Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait, and the liberation of Kuwait by the US made explicit the reality that Washington remains the principal bulwark for regional security in the Gulf. Most of the Gulf States would like to see a continuing American security role in the region.

Equally important for India is the reality that dominance in the Gulf by a distant power like the U.S. may be preferable than the exercise of hegemony by a local power, say one of India's neighbours. India and the U.S. share similar political objectives such as sustaining political moderation, economic freedom and regional stability.

India has jettisoned the old diplomatic baggage of Indian Ocean being a 'zone of peace' and has come to appreciate the diamention of seapower in the region. On the otherhand, Washington realise that India is a credible and 'reliable seaforce in the region and therefore a natural partner in any future maritime cooperative mechanism in the region. It is primarily one of mutual benefit that lies at the heart of evolving security cooperation at sea between the two countries.

The idea of Indo-US cooperation in the Indian Ocean which is a departure from the Cold War scenario was at the initiative of Secretary of State, General Colin Powell who saw the need for supporting the Indian Navy which he considered was the fourth ranked Asian seaforce and having the potential to help keep the peace in the warm embayed link ocean. The broad elements of Indo-US cooperation are:

First, there is energy security. India has become one of the world's largest importers of petroleum products. As its economy grows, India's reliance on the Gulf for its energy will increase. The U.S. remains the principal external influence on the world's petroleum market. Hence India and the U.S. have a common interest in ensuring a steady flow of oil from the Gulf and at reasonable prices. Already there is an OPEC consensus to cut oil production by about one million barrels per day

Second, with the volatility of the oil market and the growing dependence of East and South-East Asia on the energy resources of the Gulf, the safety and security of the sea lanes of communication between the Gulf and East Asia has become a vital necessity. India, which straddles the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean and the choke points of Malacca & Hormuz and the US being the principal naval power, could do a lot together with Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) navies in cooperative harmony for keeping SLOCS safe and secure across the Indian Ocean by promoting political stability and commercial viability.

Third, New Delhi has a significant stake in the economic prosperity of the Gulf which is home to a large number of Indian expatriate workers and a big market for Indian goods and services. The U.S. could play a positive role in

promoting greater energy and economic integration between India and the Gulf which could form the nucleus of a broader economic and security community in the Indian Ocean littoral.

Fourthly, both India US and Asean Countries have a major interest in promoting political stability in the region that is threatened by fundamentalism, cross border terrorism and arms trafficking from both the Golden crescent and Golden Triangle. New Delhi and Washington must find an institutional framework for sustained political consultations on Gulf security. Such a mechanism could help reduce the many misperceptions of each other's policy and reconcile political differences on how best to deal with the complex situation in the Gulf. Admiral Blair, C-in-C Pacific, during his recent visit to India emphasised the policy of U.S. and Indian Navy cooperating to establish good order at Sea without going into Defence pacts.

Finally, there is a much greater possibility today for harmonising the Indian and American positions on the Gulf and the Indian Ocean. New Delhi's approach to the Gulf has acquired greater pragmatism and sophistication, as part its greater diplomatic activism in the region. It has reached out to countries such as Saudi Arabia, which it had neglected in the past. It is also strengthening ties with traditional friends like Oman and consolidating the relationship with Iran, Myanmar and Vietnam, China which is a net importer of oil may prefer to have secure SLOCS in the immediate future, but her interests in the Indian Ocean particularly in the Bay of Bengal merits careful analysis.

Conclusion

It is not possible nor desirable to look at Indian Ocean security in compartmental terms. India's interest in the area are complex ranging from energy security to multi religious and multi ethnic society. For example there are more Muslims in India than in Pakistan or Bangladesh. There are more Nepal's and Tamils in India than in Nepal or Sri Lanka. Hence any disturbance in adjoining countries will impinge on India's security calculus.

Maritime security is therefore linked to development of maritime cooperation such as an interlocking regional mechanism for Asia-Pacific as also the acceleration of naval arms race and consequent arms control and lastly the emerging trends in international relations which is fast changing after the catastrophic incidents of 11 Sept.

Moreover if globalization succeeds in a democratic country with a free market economy where poverty and illiteracy are major road blocks, then it will be a global pattern benefiting the majority of developing countries. The World Bank further states that India, China, Russia, Indonesia and Brazil are the key players in the world economy. India has also been projected by the World Bank as the fourth largest economy after US, China and Japan in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) as shown up by the resilience of her economy which

comfortably absorbed the East Asian financial crisis and post Pokhran sanctions. US National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice emphasized 'India's potential as a democratic stabilising force in South Asia and her role in economic development as it becomes a major economic player'. There is unfortunately a wide chasm between Pentagons view of security and US industries vision of business opportunities on the populated Sub-Continent. What is needed to be pursued in a broader bilateral agenda so as to build a tangible relationship at multiple levels.

Moreover as the largest littoral country and with a stable democratic polity and a credible three dimensional sea force, India is well placed to play a meaningful role in this link ocean. As Admiral Dennis Blair stated recently in New Delhi that 'one of the key factors for future security in the Asia Pacific region is to think of interaction among regional armed forces more like commercial transactions where all participants gain better security as a result of individual transactions'.

Hence, India's Navy and JMSDF in concert with the US Navy should act as regional naval powers as maritime stability is overtly dependent on the surrounding environment which in turn is subordinate to economic, budgetary and developmental interest and therefore needs to be in harmony with the socio-economic, geo-political and techno-strategic environment in the strategic link ocean which the US evangelist of seapower Admiral Mahan declared more than a century ago as 'the Ocean of Destiny in the 21st century'.